

Jesus' Death and Burial

Early in the morning a man was taken by the temple guards and brought before the Jewish leaders. First Annas and then Caiaphas sentenced Him to death. He stood before the Roman governor Pilate, then Herod the tetrarch of Galilee, and then Pilate again. After giving the choice between a man convicted of sedition or the man Pilate pronounced innocent, the crowd choose to have the innocent killed on the cross.

Numerous events happened as he hung on the cross; dead people came out of their graves, the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom, and the sun stopped shining from noon to 3 pm. At last He breathed His last breath and uttered the words "It is finished!" (John 19.30)

Now what? The disciples or at least most of them vanished. Their hopes crushed as they saw their Master nailed to the cross. What would happen to His body? The Romans sometimes left the bodies on the cross as a reminder to the people how barbaric the Romans could be. In those cases, the birds would come and eat the flesh until the body had been consumed or fallen off the cross. Sometimes the Roman soldiers would take the body and throw it into a mass grave.

A disciple appeared named Joseph, from the region of Arimathea, and he went before Pilate. He asked for the body of the man, Luke 23.52. It took some courage especially for a believer was too afraid to say so publicly. Pilate was surprised the man on the cross died so quickly and even inquired of his soldiers if the man was truly dead. Being satisfied the criminal was indeed dead, Pilate allowed Joseph to take the body and bury it. Perhaps Josephus was in a hurry due to the law of Moses. A man hung on a tree could not be left overnight, Deuteronomy 21.22-23.

Another disciple, Nicodemus, who confessed his belief that the man on the cross was from God, came with spices and oils in order to prepare the body for its burial. Due to touching a dead body, both men were now unclean, and would have to be purified, Numbers 19.11-12.

The body of the man was taken to a newly hewn out tomb. One in which no one had been buried before. These two disciples were accompanied by two women. Mary from the region of Magdala and another Mary, the mother of

Josephs, were present, Mark 15.47. They watch Josephus and Nicodemus place the man from the cross in the tomb and roll a stone over its mouth. They would have to wait until after the Passover to come back to the tomb and finish the burial with the spices and aloes they were going to prepare, Luke 23.55-56.

Like most burials it was one of sadness, an act of love on behalf of the two men and women. If not for the love of these people the body of the man might have suffered the fate earlier mentioned.

It was a courageous act. After all, the other disciples left and were now afraid and despondent. Joseph was a secret disciple up to this time but no more! Nicodemus had likewise come forward. The last time Nicodemus is mentioned in the Bible was due to the burial of this man. The women followers of the man from the cross had not deserted Him after His death.

While it was not pleasant it was yet necessary to take care of His body and bury it. It is what you do when a love one dies.

Finally, it was an expectant act. At this time the scriptures were not on their mind but later on they would understand more about this Man's death. It was foretold that the Messiah would suffer and die on a cross. But it was also foretold that He would be raised three days later. The Man, Himself, said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." (John 2:19) These disciples would later on understand that the Man was talking about His body.

As we read in the scriptures of this Man's burial we also read of another burial. In order to please Him we must be buried with Him, Romans 6.3-4. In this burial we will be raised free from sin and walk in newness of life.

This burial is to be an act of love as we obey His commandments, John 14.15. Some will be afraid of obeying Him due to being afraid of what others might think or fearing failure but those with courage will obey Him. Like the burial of this Man, our burial is necessary, we cannot be His follower, we cannot be cleansed of our sins without it, Acts 2.37-38.

Like Him we will be buried. His burial was into an earthly tomb but ours is in a watery grave. We are immersed, covered with water, as we are buried or planted into Him.

Finally, our burial into Him is an expectant act. He commands us to be buried into Him so as to be raised in order to walk in newness of life. Without the burial you cannot have the resurrection or the new man.

Of course, the Man who died on the cross about two thousand years ago will return and all those who have been buried with Him will be raised to be with Him in heaven, 1 Corinthians 15. - Dennis Tucker